

Continuing Promise 2025 Set to Begin



The Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) sit at anchor during Continuing Promise 2015. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Gary Johnson)

By U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command / U.S. 4th Fleet Public Affairs, May 13, 2025

MAYPORT, Florida – The U.S. Navy Mercy-class hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) will deploy this June-August to the U.S. Southern Command area of operations as part of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet's Continuing Promise 2025 mission. After several months of detailed planning, USNS Comfort is scheduled to visit Grenada, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Dominican Republic during the nearly three month-long mission.

Continuing Promise 2025 marks the 16th mission to the region

since 2007 and the eighth aboard USNS Comfort. The mission will foster goodwill, strengthen existing partnerships with partner nations, and encourage the establishment of new partnerships among countries, non-federal entities, and international organizations.

The focus during each mission stop will be working alongside partner nation medical personnel to provide direct patient care and technical expertise in community clinics to improve medical readiness, strengthen partnerships, and enhance the combined capabilities of the U.S. Navy and partner nations to respond to public health disasters and humanitarian crises.

“The USNS Comfort’s deployment under Continuing Promise demonstrates the U.S. Navy’s enduring commitment to our allies and partners across the Caribbean, Central and South America,” said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. “This mission will forge lasting partnerships and deliver impactful aid, leaving a legacy of goodwill throughout the region.”

The Continuing Promise team also includes a U.S. Army veterinary element from the 248th Medical Detachment (Veterinary Service Support), which will collaborate with host nation colleagues to provide direct public health education and animal care at local veterinary organizations in-country. U.S. Navy Seabees from Navy Mobile Construction Battalion 11 will assist in host nation led community engineering projects. U.S. Navy experts will host seminars and training exercises with host nation civilian officials and military professionals covering disaster preparedness and response. These exchanges aim to support host nation facilities, improve readiness, and empower local and national officials with the knowledge and experience to act with confidence during emergencies.

“Working with our partner nation and State Department teammates, each Continuing Promise stop has been meticulously

planned to provide world-class medical care where it is needed most,” said Capt. Ryan Kendall, U.S. Navy, commodore Destroyer Squadron 40 and Continuing Promise mission commander. “Most notably, these engagements are only possible with the support of the various county teams and our military partners to make this mission an overwhelming success.”

Continuing Promise will feature the U.S. Fleet Forces Band, “Uncharted Waters.” The band will embark on USNS Comfort to conduct classes at community schools, collaborate with military and civilian musical organizations in partner nations, and entertain local communities with concerts at each mission stop. This cultural exchange aims to strengthen community ties and foster goodwill.

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USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul Scores Another Bust



The littoral combat ship USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21) interdicted a suspected drug smuggling vessel May 1 while supporting Joint Interagency Task Force South. This is the ship's third successful interdiction during its maiden deployment. In mid-April, the Minneapolis-Saint Paul interdicted two vessels, confiscating 580 kilograms (1,279 pounds) of cocaine valued at \$9,463,860 and 1,125 kilograms (2,480 pounds) of marijuana valued at \$2,807,360. The Minneapolis-Saint Paul is assigned to Commander, Task Force 45, the 4th Fleet surface task force responsible for combined naval operations, building partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean, and supporting Joint Interagency Task Force South's counter-drug trafficking operations. LEDETs are deployable specialized Coast Guard forces that enforce U.S. laws and treaties at sea. U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet supports U.S. Southern Command by employing maritime forces in cooperative security operations to maintain access, enhance interoperability, and build partnerships to promote regional security and stability in the Caribbean and Central and South America.

[By U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command / U.S. 4th Fleet Public Affairs](#), 13 May 2025

CARIBBEAN SEA – The littoral combat ship USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21) interdicted a suspected drug smuggling vessel May 1 while supporting Joint Interagency Task Force South.

Alerted to suspected drug smuggling from maritime patrol aircraft operating in the region, the Minneapolis-Saint Paul proceeded to the target location and launched a helicopter from the embarked Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 50. The helicopter crew observed the suspect drug smuggling vessel jettisoning packages. The Minneapolis-Saint Paul then launched its rigid-hull inflatable boat with an embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) to intercept the vessel. The boarding team recovered 22 bales of suspected cocaine.

“The USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul is delivering decisive blows against transnational criminal organizations,” said Rear Adm. Carlos Sardiello, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet. “These interdictions send a clear message: We are vigilant, and illicit trafficking will be interdicted to protect our homeland as well as our regional partners from this threat.”

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“I’m consistently impressed by the speed and precision of our joint team,” said Cmdr. Steven Fresse, Commanding Officer of USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul. “The professionalism and expertise of the Aviation and Law Enforcement Detachments in concert with ship’s crew continue to be instrumental in these successful interdictions.”

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**Surface Sailors Level-up,
Control the Air**



Operations Specialist 1st Class Cameron Rogers leads air intercept controller classroom training at Tactical Training Group Pacific at Naval Base Point Loma, Mar. 10, 2025. Air intercept controllers deploy aboard various platforms to support carrier strike group operations around the globe and have played a key role in recent operations in the Red Sea. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Kelby Sanders)

By MC1 Kelby Sanders, COMNAVSURFPAC Public Affairs, May 2, 2025

SAN DIEGO, California – Since the latest outbreak of conflict in and around the Red Sea in October of 2023, several U.S. Navy ships operating within carrier strike groups have engaged and defeated hostile airborne targets while patrolling the area.

The Sailors communicating and coordinating with fighter pilots to shoot down Houthi missiles and drones, called Air Intercept Controllers (AICs), are trained and supported by an elite team of operations specialists assigned to Commander, Naval Surface

Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CNSP) in San Diego.

In response to an increased demand for qualified and motivated AICs, Senior Chief Operations Specialist James Byrnes undertook the necessary steps to establish a detachment of enlisted operations specialists dedicated to developing more AICs and providing them with consistent, challenging training opportunities.

Over the past year, this detachment has conducted more than 800 hours of training and “leveled-up” numerous AICs.

“This has changed the culture of what it means to be an air controller,” said Byrnes. “We’ve provided technical experts to the fleet and enhanced our warfighting capability.”

The AIC training pipeline consists of seven levels of expertise, each featuring specific knowledge and quality-of-work requirements focused on their ability to communicate clearly, accurately, and concisely with friendly aircraft in high-stress environments. The AIC must demonstrate continuous improvement to progress to higher levels.

“We operate in a world that is constantly evolving,” said Operations Specialist 1st Class Cameron Rogers. “In my time as an AIC, I have learned that we are never done preparing and never done studying.”

The CNSP AIC detachment utilizes the Tactical Training Group Pacific Battle Lab at Naval Base Point Loma, in Point Loma, Calif., to immerse trainees in simulated air combat exercises, but also deploys its Sailors aboard ships as operators to complement their watch teams.

“I learned that for real world threats, especially when controlling air assets from different branches or coalition forces, simplifying communications to be easily understood is

critical,” said Operations Specialist 1st Class Victor Lacey, who has recently deployed aboard Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers USS Spruance (DDG 111) and USS Frank E. Petersen (DDG 121).

Lacey is credited with supervising and controlling six confirmed drone kills while aboard Spruance and earned the Combat Action Ribbon.

The detachment was established with a small team of six Sailors. Within a few months, the detachment was supporting its first carrier strike group deployment.

Due to the program’s success, CNSP increased manning to support 25 billets and they’ve now supported four carrier strike group deployments.

While manning challenges persist fleetwide, CNSP remains focused on placing highly trained and motivated AICs where they’re needed most.

“Personnel are the key,” said Rogers. “The difference is made when people who care and study and execute effective air control are added to the fight. A good air intercept controller is a force multiplier.”

**HII Welcomes High School
Seniors to Shipbuilding**

Careers at Newport News Shipbuilding



[From HII](#)

NEWPORT NEWS, Va., May 09, 2025 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) – More than two dozen high school seniors know what they’ll be doing after graduation this year, after accepting offers to begin their shipbuilding careers at HII’s (NYSE: HII) Newport News Shipbuilding division.

The shipyard participated in the [New Horizons Regional Education Centers](#) (NHREC) Good Life Solution Program’s Career Selection Day Thursday, in Hampton. During the event, 18 students accepted employment offers from NNS, to either begin full-time trade positions within the shipyard or attend [The Newport News Shipbuilding Apprenticeship School](#). Funded by HII to train and develop the next generation of shipbuilders, The Apprenticeship School offers four- to eight-year, tuition-free apprenticeships in 19 trades and seven optional programs.

The [Good Life Solution Program](#) is a collection of partnerships

between NHREC and local employers looking to improve the way they recruit, hire, train and retain entry-level new hires out of high school.

Additionally, The Apprentice School held a ceremony April 29 to recognize high school students who participated in the Youth Builders program, with 13 of those students accepting offers to attend The Apprentice School. Youth Builders is a pre-apprenticeship workforce readiness program open to 11th and 12th grade students with interest in shipbuilding careers.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: <https://hii.com/newsroom/>.

“These students are embarking on careers where the mission and purpose is clear: delivering the submarines and aircraft carriers our nation needs,” said Xavier Beale, NNS vice president of human resources. “We are thrilled to welcome them into our shipbuilding family as they build their careers while making important contributions to our national security.”

For more information about careers at Newport News Shipbuilding visit, hii.com/careers.

Philippines, U.S. Conclude Exercise Balikatan 25



U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Mary Grace Villarica, center-right, a dental hygienist with the Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force, and Philippine Dental Corps 1st Lt. Eliza Aira, a dental hygienist assigned to 1365th Dental Detachment 5ID, teach dental hygiene to local children during Exercise Balikatan 25. *Photo credit: U.S. Marine Corps | Lance Cpl. Roger- Junior Annoh*

CAMP AGUINALDO, Quezon City, Philippines – The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) hosted the closing ceremony of Exercise Balikatan 25 on May 9, marking the successful completion of the largest annual combined military exercise between the Philippines and the United States.

During this 40th iteration of Balikatan, more than 14,000 Filipino, U.S., Australian and Japanese service members trained shoulder-to-shoulder across the Philippine archipelago.

“Together, we executed complex training across the archipelago, building readiness for today and resilience for tomorrow,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Michael S.

Cederholm, the U.S. Joint Task Force commander. "From live-fire drills and humanitarian missions in Palawan to sea denial in the Luzon Strait with the deployment of NMESIS to Batan Island, we advanced our capability to deter, respond, and prevail."

In a display of the increasingly modernized Philippine-U.S. alliance, the combined force conducted six all-domain field events, enhancing air and missile defense, counter-landing, and maritime security and strike capabilities. These events provided tactical and operational units with realistic, challenging training while refining command and control capabilities throughout the Philippines.

At the same time, service members from all four participating nations constructed classrooms, provided medical and dental exams, and built community ties during five humanitarian civic assistance projects. These events introduced nearly \$2.5 million in support and supplies for local Filipino communities and improved the lives of more than 75,000 Filipinos.

"Beyond the technical achievements, the most valuable outcome has been the enhanced mutual trust, deeper understanding and renewed commitment to shared security goals," said Philippine Army Gen. Romeo S. Brawner Jr., chief of staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines. "Balikatan is not merely a series of military exercises – it is a demonstration of enduring partnerships and collaborative resolve."

With the improved quality, complexity, and scope of this year's events, Balikatan 25 underscored the strength of the ironclad alliance in addition to the enduring friendship between the two nations and other regional allies and partners.

"The evolutions in Balikatan, and in our alliance, are only possible thanks to the foundation on which they are built: our shared democratic values and the deep abiding ties between our

peoples,” said MaryKay L. Carlson, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines. “With that strong foundation in place, our countries work together – at all ranks, civilian and in uniform – to adapt to evolving threats in order to achieve our shared security goals.”

USS Forrest Sherman Departs Norfolk for Routine Deployment



From U.S. 2nd Fleet, May 7, 2025

NORFOLK, Va. – Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) departed Naval Station Norfolk for a scheduled deployment on May 6, 2025.

USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98) departed Norfolk as part of the

Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (CSG-12) for a scheduled deployment to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations. The deployment will underscore the U.S. Navy's commitment to maritime security and stability in the region.

"Our crew has relentlessly prepared for this deployment and are ready for any challenge we may face; I could not be more proud to lead these Sailors on deployment," said Cmdr. Andrew Darjany, commanding officer of Forrest Sherman. "Thank you to our families and the Norfolk community for your support as we head out to sea."

Forrest Sherman's last deployment was in 2022, when they served as the flagship for Standing NATO Maritime Group Two and operated in the European theater. As the flagship, Forrest Sherman led a multinational maritime group in operations throughout the Mediterranean Sea, ensuring security and stability in the region while supporting deterrence and defense of NATO territory. The ship conducted five multinational exercises with NATO Allies and partners, strengthening relationships with these critical allies and partners and reinforcing the U.S. commitment to the NATO Alliance and to the region.

"The Sailors of USS Forrest Sherman are headed to do our nation's work at sea," said Rear Adm. Paul Lanzilotta, commander of CSG-12. "The combat capabilities that this ship brings to a fight will be ready whenever tasked to deter, and if necessary, defeat, aggression in defense of America's interests around the world."

"Relentless Fighting Spirit," Forrest Sherman's motto, highlights the crew's commitment to their mission and to the U.S. Navy and our Allies and partners. Commissioned on January 28, 2006, USS Forrest Sherman is named in honor of Adm. Forrest Sherman, the 12th Chief of Naval Operations.

U.S. 2nd Fleet, reestablished in 2018 in response to the

changing global security environment, develops and employs maritime ready forces to fight across multiple domains in the Atlantic and Arctic in order to ensure access, deter aggression and defend U.S., allied, and partner interests.

EOS Awarded Laser Powder Bed Fusion Training Contract by U.S. Navy



The U.S. Navy's Maritime Industrial Base (MIB) Program, in partnership with BlueForge Alliance, has funded the EOS Additive Minds Academy to train the MIB suppliers in laser powder bed fusion (LPBF) process chain to strengthen the industrial 3D printing workforce

MIB suppliers will participate in hands-on and online Additive Minds Academy courses, designed to equip users with critical skills in additive manufacturing

From EOS

NOVI, Michigan, May 7, 2025 – EOS, a leading supplier of additive manufacturing (AM) solutions for industrial 3D printing, today announced a contract to support the U.S. Navy’s Maritime Industrial Base initiative to provide end-to-end LPBF process training for MIB suppliers. The initiative aims to strengthen AM efficiency and bridge the maritime AM education and workforce gap.

Beginning in May 2025, [the training program will take place at the Additive Minds Academy Center in Novi, Michigan](#), and combines online coursework with hands-on experience to equip MIB suppliers with critical skills in AM software, LPBF system operation, and ASTM machine certifications free of charge.

“This program helps the U.S. Navy offer suppliers skilled personnel trained in new technologies like laser powder bed fusion, which will enable us to quickly fill critical component gaps that our traditional manufacturing base can’t provide in a timely fashion,” according to Dr. Justin Rettaliata, MIB Program Additive Manufacturing Lead. “Through initiatives like this, the MIB Program is advancing more agile and responsive manufacturing technologies in the U.S. Navy’s supply chain to quickly produce parts.”

The initiative aims to strengthen AM efficiency and bridge the maritime AM education and workforce development gap. All courses will be led by EOS and ASTM certified Additive Minds Academy trainers, and upon completion, participants will earn industry-recognized certifications for metal AM data preparation and metal machine operation, certified by ASTM.

The EOS Additive Minds Academy training courses include:

- Data Preparation Metal Certification
- Metal LPBF System Operator Training
- ASTM Machine Operator Certification

“In recent years, the imperative for faster, more adaptable manufacturing processes to meet the U.S. Navy’s production objectives has become increasingly evident,” said Fabian Alefeld, Director of Business Development and Additive Minds Academy at EOS. “Bridging this manufacturing gap demands innovative thinking, advanced technologies, and – most critically, a skilled workforce equipped to leverage these new tools effectively. We are honored to provide the training and education essential for the MIB and the U.S. Navy to successfully integrate additive manufacturing into their broader operational framework.”

Rite-Solutions Awarded \$234M SBIR Phase III Contract for Combat Systems of the Future

From Rite Solutions

MIDDLETOWN, R.I. (May 6, 2025)—On May 1st, the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) awarded a 5-year, SBIR Phase III contract to Rite-Solutions. This \$243M contract – the largest in the history of the company – will enable Rite-Solutions to

provide innovative solutions in systems and software engineering that are geared towards maximizing the effectiveness and suitability of future combat system while reducing risk and total cost.

“This contract award is one of the most significant achievements in the history of our company,” said CEO and Co-Founder Joe Marino. “We are extremely excited to be able to bring our innovation and energy to the next evolution of combat systems.” Co-Founders and Board members Jim and Linda Lavoie agree, stating that “this contract, resulting from the hard work and excellent support of our workforce, solidifies our place as a significant contributor to the advancement of our Undersea Warfare capabilities.”

The goals of the CSoF initiative include (1) improving mission effectiveness while achieving optimal manning levels and reducing total life-cycle costs; (2) inserting new functionality and capability for current and future ship platform and combat systems improvements in both organic and off-hull systems; and (3) leveraging systems engineering to develop cost-effective improvements in the lab environment for modeling, simulation, test and integration. Efforts will be focused on new submarine platforms, including but not limited to the Next-Generation Attack Submarine (SSN(X)), to support technology innovations and improvements, acquisition, research and development, design, specification development, and test and evaluation.

“This is a big win for Rite-Solutions and our many talented industry partners,” said Laurie Carter, Executive Vice President for Business Development and CSoF Capture Manager. “We are eager to get started – bringing our innovative mindset to the goal of building a more efficient, flexible and adaptable combat system.”

Execution of tasking under the CSoF contract will be managed by Mike Miller, CSoF Director and Program Manager, who will be

responsible for coordinating the efforts of Rite-Solutions and nearly 20 industry partners.

SECDEF Directs Flag and General Billet Reductions

From the Department of Defense, May 5, 2025

ARLINGTON, Va. – The following memorandum was issued by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth:

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP SUBJECT:

General/Flag Officer Reductions

The Department of Defense is committed to ensuring the lethality of U.S. Military Forces to deter threats and, when necessary, achieve decisive victory. To accomplish this mission, we must cultivate exceptional senior leaders who drive innovation and operational excellence, unencumbered by unnecessary bureaucratic layers that hinder their growth and effectiveness.

A critical step in this process is removing redundant force structure to optimize and streamline leadership by reducing excess general and flag officer positions.

Therefore, I direct the following actions:

- A minimum 20% reduction of 4-star positions across the Active Component;
- A minimum 20% reduction of general officers in the National Guard; and

- An additional minimum 10% reduction in general and flag officers with the realignment of the Unified Command Plan.

Through these measures, we will uphold our position as the most lethal fighting force in the world, achieving peace through strength and ensuring greater efficiency, innovation, and preparedness for any challenge that lies ahead.

USS Miguel Keith Completes Overhaul at MHI

From U.S. Naval Ship Repair Facility Japan RMC (SRF-JRMC), May 2, 2025

YOKOHAMA, KANAGAWA, Japan – The U.S. Navy's Lewis B. Puller-class expeditionary mobile base USS Miguel Keith (ESB-5) completed a five-month Regular Overhaul (ROH) availability at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI), Yokohama, Japan, April 15, 2025.

The ROH marks the first time a Japanese shipyard has bid on and won an ROH contract of this scale for a U.S. Navy Vessel. The ROH is much larger work vice voyage repairs (VRs), which have been conducted at the shipyard previously. 10 U.S.C. § 863 prohibits overhauling, repairing, or maintaining U.S. naval vessels in foreign-owned and operated shipyards outside the United States, except for VRs. Still, since the USS Miguel Keith's availability was under 6 months and the ship was not due to return to the U.S. within 15 months, this statute did not apply.

U.S. Ship Repair Facility and Regional Maintenance Center's (SRF-JRMC) Singapore Detachment, which usually supports the

ship's maintenance availabilities, planned the \$12 million project executed by MHI. During the availability, 56,000 square feet of nonskid decking was replaced on the flight deck and mission deck. In twenty-nine spaces, including the galley, scullery, laundry, and berthing areas, deck replacement and preservation were accomplished. Over 10,000 square feet of the forward deckhouse superstructure and MOGAS deck and associated equipment were also preserved. MHI also fabricated, welded, and replaced over 300 feet of flight deck catwalk safety handrails. Additionally, four galley ovens were replaced, and the entire exterior of the ship was painted bow to stern.

This was the first ROH for the Singapore Detachment, according to Douglas Cabacungan, the Project Manager. "Usually, we provide shorter emergent and continuous maintenance repairs outside of Japan," said Cabacungan. "So, we were able to expand our skill set, work outside of our comfort zone, and work with a contractor we normally do not work with which will pay dividends when we need to start operating in places we aren't currently."

"The ability to use Mitsubishi Heavy Industry's shipyard to conduct this level of maintenance availability has allowed SRF-JRMC's organic workforce in Yokosuka to focus their efforts on the three other warship maintenance availabilities being conducted simultaneously," said Capt. Wendel Penetrante, Commander of SRF-JRMC. "We were even able to complete one of those availabilities 3 days early and respond to two unplanned voyage repairs."

The USS Miguel Keith is a 240-meter-long vessel designed to be a customizable floating command base that can launch helicopters and small boats, provide living quarters for troops, and command-and-control facilities. Her large open decks can accommodate a variety of other capabilities, including berthing for special operations troops, laundry facilities, or cold storage. The ship has been operating in

the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations since September 2020 with a mixed crew of Sailors and civilian mariners from Military Sealift Command (MSC).

For over 75-years, U.S. Naval Ship Repair Facility and Japan Regional Maintenance Center (SRF-JRMC) has been the linchpin of U.S. naval operations in the Indo-Pacific region, providing intermediate-level and depot-level repair for the ships of the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Seventh Fleet.